

1706 *The Subject's Duty.* 4474.c

A  
**SERMON**


Preach'd at the Parish-Church of  
**St. DUNSTAN** *in the West,*  
O N

*Thursday, MARCH* the 8th 170<sup>8</sup>.

BEING THE

**Anniversary DAY**

O F

Her MAJESTY'S  Accession  
to the THRONE.

PROV. XXIV. 21.

*My Son, Fear thou the Lord and the King; and meddle not  
with them that are given to Change.*

By **OFSPRING BLACKALL**, D. D. Chap-  
lain in Ordinary to Her MAJESTY.

*Publish'd at the Request of the Gentlemen of the VESTRY of  
the said Parish.*

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*My Son, Fear thou the Lord and the King ; and meddle not  
with them that are given to Change.*

**I** Know not how to begin a Discourse upon this Subject better, than in those Words wherewith the Judicious Mr. Hooker begins his Learned Discourse of the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Policy*: 'He (*says he*) that goes about to perswade a Multitude that they are not so well govern'd as they ought to be, shall never want attentive and favourable Hearers ; because they know the manifold Defects wherunto every Kind of Regiment is subject, but the secret Lets and Difficulties, which in Publick Proceedings are innumerable and inevitable, they have not ordinarily the Judgment to consider. And because such as openly reprove supposed Disorders of State, are taken for principal Friends to the common Benefit of all, and for Men that carry singular Freedom of Mind ; under this fair and plausible Colour, whatsoever they utter passes for good and currant ; that which is wanting in the Weight of their Speech being supply'd by the Aptness of Mens Minds to accept and believe it. Whereas, on the other side, If we maintain things that are establish'd, we have not only to strive with a Number of heavy Prejudices deeply rooted in the Hearts of Men, who think that herein we serve the Time, and speak in Favour of the present State, because thereby we either hold or seek Preferment ; but also to bear such Exceptions as Minds so averted before-hand usually take against that which they are loth should be pour'd into them.

But what would not be so well taken from me, will, I hope, be better taken when coming out of the Mouth of a very Wise Man ; and such an One, you will surely all acknowledge Solomon to have been. And He it was, ( 'twas he who excell'd in wisdom all that were before him, and all that have liv'd since ; ) or rather, it was *Wisdom* it self speaking by his Mouth, which has given this Advice in the Text, which I would now perswade you to follow : *My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King ; and meddle not with them that are given to Change.*

Concerning which it may be first observ'd in general, that it is given here as a *Father's* Advice to his *Son* ; *My Son, fear thou the Lord and the King* ; and from hence we may reasonably conclude that it is very good Advice, and that to follow it will be very much for our own Profit and Advantage ; For that's the only End that a Father has in the Counsel and Instruction that he gives his Son ; he never means any thing by it but his Son's Good ; he never advises his Son to any thing but what he thinks it will be for his Interest to do : And whenever he ushers in any Advice in such Manner as this here is introduc'd, with a solemn and particular Compellation, serving to excite and fix the Attention to what follows ; *My Son, do this* ; or, *My Son, do that* ; it is very reasonable to suppose, that he judges the Advice which he is then about to give to be matter of the greatest Usefulness and Importance ; 'tis a sign that 'tis what he would have his Son take a special Regard to, and be very careful to observe.

serve. And such is, most manifestly, the Counsel which the Wise Father here gives to his Son; it is concerning Matters of the Highest Importance, and of the nearest Concern to every Man; *My Son, Fear thou the Lord, and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to Change.*

I. For that the first Branch of this Advice is such, will, I suppose, be readily granted by all, *My Son, fear thou the Lord*; For *the Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom*; The Fear of God induces and comprehends our whole Duty to him; if we fear God as we ought to do, and as a good Son fears his Father, we shall readily obey him in every Command that he lays upon us. Nay, this comprehends all our Duty not only to God, but to Men too, to whom we are to perform all the Offices of our Relation to them for God's sake, and out of a Principle of Conscience and Obedience to God. Of this Fear of God then we may say, as our Saviour does of the Love of God, (and we may truly say it, for indeed the Love of God and the Fear of God are in Substance the same) that it is *the first and great Commandment*; which if we are careful to keep according to its true and comprehensive Meaning, we shall be deficient in no Part of Duty.

II. But the Second Branch of the Wise Father's Advice to his Son is also, next to the former, of the highest Importance and of the nearest Concern, *Fear the King*; *My Son, fear thou the Lord, and the King*: By which is meant, that our next Care to that of keeping a good Conscience towards God, should be that of behaving our selves orderly and regularly in that Station which God has plac'd us in of Subordination and Subjection to those Men that are set over us by God with a Power to order and enact such Constitutions (only not contrary to the Divine Laws) as are necessary to conserve Justice and Peace in that Society over which they preside: *Fear the King*, that is, 'Obey him, keep his Laws, and behave thy self in all things as a dutiful Subject towards him; Or if thou canst not with a good Conscience obey his Commands, yet do not dare to resist his Authority. If what he commands be lawfull, do readily as thou art commanded: Or if it be not lawfull, (which may sometimes be; for the Laws of Men are not always agreeable to the Laws of God) yet even in that Case thou art not discharged from thy Subjection to him. for when thou canst not obey, thou must submit; and that not only because thou canst not help it, but altho' thou couldst; if thou canst not do as he bids thee, thou must take patiently the Punishment that is impos'd upon thee for thy Disobedience.

This is the Duty of Subjects to their Governors, as it is briefly taught in the Text, *Fear the King*; and more largely in other Places of holy Scripture; as in Eccles. 8. 2. *I counsel thee to keep the Kings Commandment, and that in regard of the Oath of GOD*: in Rom. 13. *Let every Soul be subject unto the Higher Powers; For there is no Power but of GOD; the Powers that be are ordained of GOD. Whosoever therefore resisteth the Power, resisteth the Ordinance of GOD, and they that resist shall receive to themselves Damnation*—Wherefore ye must needs be subject not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience sake; and in 1 Pet. 2, 13. *Submit yourselves to every Ordinance of Man, for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the King as Supreme, or unto Governors as unto them that are sent by*



*him, for the Punishment of Evil-Doers, and for the Praise of them that do well. For so is the Will of GOD, that with well-doing ye may put to Silence, the Ignorance of foolish Men. As free, and not using your Liberty for a Cloke of Maliciousness, but as the Servants of Christ. Honour all Men; Love the Brotherhood; Fear GOD, Honour the King.*

This, I say, is the Duty, ( as it is plainly taught in Scripture ) of Subjects to their Governors ; that is, to them who have the Supreme Authority of the Nation to which they belong, by whatsoever Name or Title they are call'd ; that is, to the *Legislative Power* in what Hands soever it is lodg'd by the particular Constitution of the Place. For there may be, and in some Countries there is, the Name and Title of a King without the Power ; and there may be, and in some other Countries there is the Power of a King without the Name ; Nay, there is indeed in every Country, State, Kingdom or Commonwealth, the Kingly or the Supreme Power lodg'd somewhere or other, either in One, in Few, or in more Hands : This Power, I say, there is in the Government of every Nation, as well in a Democracy, or Aristocracy, as in a Monarchy ; and as well in the most Limited Monarchy, as in that which is the most Arbitrary and Absolute ; and I say, 'tis this *Kingly Power*, where-ever 'tis by the Constitution seated or lodg'd, that is to be fear'd and obey'd : For the Scripture only declares in general the Duties of Governors to their Subjects, and of Subjects to their Governors ; but it does not expressly define or prescribe any one Form or Manner of Government as necessary to be set up and preserved in all Nations ; but leaves every Country to it self to establish that Form of Government which is most suitable to its own particular Temper and Genius. Only when any sort of Government is set up and establish'd ( there being, as was said before, in every Form of Government a Kingly, that is, an Absolute and Arbitrary Power lodg'd somewhere or other, either in one Hand or in more ) it then commands Obedience, and forbids Resistance to this Sovereign Power ; It commands Submission to this Power, as to the *Ordinance of GOD*, ( for there is no Power but of GOD, and the Powers that be are ordained of GOD ; ) and it declares, that they that being plac'd in Subjection to this Power do make Resistance to it, *resist the Ordinance of GOD, and shall receive to themselves Damnation.*

And thus much of the Second Branch of the Wise Man's Advice to his Son ; *My Son, Fear thou the King.* But before I come to speak of the Third, *Meddle not with them that are given to Change,* I think it may be of good Use to make some brief Observations upon the Two former Branches of it, consider'd as given together in the same Breath, as connected with each other, as depending one upon the other ; *Fear the Lord, and the King.* And,

1. From the Order in which these Two Branches of his Advice are plac'd, *Fear thou the Lord, and the King,* it may be observ'd, that God is to be first fear'd, then the King ; or that God is to be more fear'd than the King ; that no Power upon Earth has Authority to make Laws contrary to the Divine Laws, or to discharge its Subjects from those Obligations which were before laid upon them by the Law of God. This is so evident, That the

*Apostles*



*Apostles* when they had been charg'd by the *Jewish Sanhedrim* to forbear Preaching in the Name of *Jesus*, *Acts* 4. 16, 17. to do which they had before receiv'd a Command from *God*, boldly appeal'd even to the Council themselves, to judge, and declare whether in such Case their Order ought to be obey'd; as knowing that they themselves would not dare to affirm that a Human Law could evacuate or set by a contrary Law of *God*, *V. 19*. *Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the Sight of GOD, to hearken unto you more than unto GOD. judge ye.*

2. From the Advice of Fearing and Obeying the King, being immediately subjoin'd to that of Fearing *God*, and both being given as it were in the same Breath, *Fear the Lord, and the King*, it may be observ'd, that our highest Obligation next to that of Obeying *God*, is to obey and submit ourselves to those whom *God* has made his Deputies and Viceroy's here upon Earth: And this is the Relation wherein Earthly Kings, that is, the Sovereign Powers of every State or Nation, do stand to *God*. *By me Kings reign — By me Princes rule*; so we are told, *Prov.* 8. 15, 16. *The most High ruleth in the Kingdom of Men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will*; so we are taught, *Dan.* 4. 32. *And there is no Power but of GOD; the Powers that be are ordained of GOD*, says the *Apostle*; *Rom.* 13. 1. And again, *He is the Minister of GOD to thee for Good; He is the Minister of GOD, an Avenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil. V. 4*. And from this Relation wherein the Supreme Powers of every Nation do stand to *God*, they themselves are sometimes in Scripture called *Gods*, *Exod.* 22. 28: they are said to *judge not for Man but for the Lord*, *2 Chr.* 19. 6. and the Judgment that they give is called, *GOD's Judgment. Deut.* 1. 17. Having therefore a sort of God-like Power communicated to them by *God*, 'tis but fit that next to *God* they should be had in the highest Honour by their Subjects, and that after the Care of Religion, the Subjects next chiefest Care should be to behave themselves dutifully to those whom *God* has set over them, in order to preserve Peace and Justice in the World, *Fear the Lord, and the King*.

3. From the Connexion that is made in the Text between these Two Duties, the *Fear* of *God* and of the King, it may be further observ'd, and most certainly inferr'd, that they are not Repugnant and Contradictory, nay, that they are very Consistent with each other. So that a good Man may both fear *God* and the King too; and there can never be a Necessity lying upon any Man from his Obligation to discharge one of these Duties, to neglect or transgress the other. It is not therefore true Loyalty, but Cowardice or Worldly-mindedness that ever makes Men give up their Religion and Conscience to the Humour of their Prince, and yeld a blind Obedience without Reserve or Exception to all his Commands, how unjust, how unreasonable, how ungodly and irreligious soever they be; for such Submission as this to the Will of Princes, is a manifest Contradiction to the first Branch of the Advice here given, *Fear the Lord*: And on the other side, it is not true Religion and a well inform'd Conscience, but an Ignorant and misguided Zeal, or a Form of Godliness without the Power of it, that ever turns Religion into Rebellion, and Faith into Faction; that ever aims

Subjects against their Sovereign, that ever deposes Princes, and unsettles the State, and disturbs the Peace and Order of the World: This is as manifest a Contradiction to the Second Branch of the Advice, *Fear the King; My Son, fear thou the Lord, and the King*; we may certainly do both of these, or else both would not have been commanded. But it is a thing too evident to be deny'd, that the Laws of Princes are not always conformable to the Laws of God, and when they are not so, it is impossible that they should be both comply'd with by an Active Obedience; For, as our *Saviour* says, *No Man can serve two Masters*; to be sure, not Two whose Commands are Repugnant and Contradictory: In this Case therefore Subjects are not in Duty bound to do as they are commanded by their Governours; and yet neither in this Case does the Precept enjoining them to *fear the King* become void and of none effect, only it then ties them to an Obedience of another Sort, that is, to a Submission of themselves to suffer the Punishment of that Law which they could not with a good Conscience yield an active Obedience to: still the King, that is, the Sovereign Civil Power must be feared; and he is fear'd and obey'd as much as in this Case he ought to be, when his Authority is not resisted, when *out of Conscience towards GOD we endure Grief, suffering wrongfully*: for (as the *Apostle* says) *hereunto are we called; Because Christ also suffer'd for us, leaving us an Example that we should follow his Steps; and so is the Will of GOD, that with well doing we should put to Silence the Ignorance of foolish men.* 1 Per. 2. 21. 15. But,

4. Lastly, What may be further observ'd and argu'd from the Connexion that seems to be here made between these Two first Branches of the Wise Man's Advice, *My Son, Fear thou the Lord, and the King*, is this; That Religion towards God is the best and surest Ground of Loyalty and due Obedience to the King; He that fears God as he ought to do, will also fear the King for God's sake, and because God has commanded him so to do; his Loyalty will be a Part of his Religion; and he, for the same Reason for which he will be ever at all Loyal, will be always so; But he that honours his Prince upon any other Principle, will honour him no more, nor no longer than while he finds his own Interest in it; He flatters his King, but he is no true Friend to him; He serves him only for Reward, and will be as ready to betray as to serve him when he can get more by that than by this.

III. And now I come to speak of the Third Branch of the Wise Father's Advice to his Son; *Meddle not with them that are given to Change*. In Order to the Explication of which it may be needful to enquire, 1. Who they are that may be said to be *given to Change*; and 2. What it is to *meddle* with such Men.

But before I do these things, I think it will be expedient, ( both to prevent any Misunderstanding of what shall be said, and likewise for some other good Purposes ) to take particular Notice *who* it is that the Advice in the Text, *not to meddle with such as are given to Change*, is directed to *My Son, meddle not with them that are given to Change*.

And here it may be consider'd, that the Giver of this Advice was *Solomon*, who was himself King over *Israel*, who had himself the whole Kingly Power,

in whom solely, and without any Partner or Sharer in the Government, the whole Sovereign Authority of the Nation, both Legislative and Executive, was lodg'd; For this you know was the Constitution among the *Jews*, the whole Sovereignty was in the King alone; Counsellors he might have, but they had no Share with him in the Legislature, for it was at his free Election to take their Advice or not; and what he enacted, whether with their Advice or without it, was good Law. Such a King, I say, was *Solomon*, who gives this Counsel, not to meddle with such as are given to Change; and it is evident that he gives the Advice to *another*, not to himself; he gives it to *his Son*, who was a Subject, not to himself, who was an Absolute and a Sovereign Prince. He gives it to the *same Person* whom, in the Clause just before, he had commanded to *fear the King*, therefore to be sure, not to the King himself, but to such only as were in Subjection to him.

And what I argue and infer from hence is this, that the Advice in the Text, *not to be given to Change*, nor to meddle with such as are given to Change, tho' as Matter of *Prudence* it may concern all, King as well as People, the Supreme Governors of a Nation, as well as those who are under Government; yet as a Matter of *Duty* it can and must belong only to such as are in Subjection, that is, only to the People and Subjects. For tho', as the *Apostle* says, *there is no Power but of God, and the Powers that be are ordained of God*, that is, tho' the Power which they have is a Portion of the Divine Power; yet there is no one particular Form of Government that can truly be said to be of Divine Institution and Appointment; and if there be not, then there is no one Form of Government but what may be chang'd and alter'd, provided that they who make the Change have sufficient Authority to make it; and sufficient Authority He or they must be allow'd to have to make any such Change or Alteration in the Form and Manner of the Government, who has, or who have for the Time being the Supreme and Sovereign Authority in that Nation wherein such Change is made; For the Sovereign Authority of every State or Nation (whether it be lodg'd in One Hand, or in many) is, and in the Nature of the thing must needs be, Absolute, Unlimited, and Uncontroulable: That which is the Highest Authority in any Nation, may do what it pleases; and because it is the Highest upon Earth, can be accountable to none but *God* for what it does. This Sovereign Authority therefore, I say, may make what Changes and Alterations it self pleases in the Frame and Constitution of the Government; and whatever Changes it makes, they are Lawful and Valid, provided that no Natural Right of any other Man be thereby invaded and violated.

Supposing therefore Government to be founded originally in the Paternal or Patriarchal Right, yet if that single Person in whom the whole Sovereign Power was lodg'd by this Right, either to give Ease to himself; finding the Weight of the Government too heavy for himself to bear alone; or to give Ease to his People, finding that it is with great Unwillingness and Reluctance that they submit to be govern'd by his Sole Will and Pleasure, or for any other good Cause and Consideration him thereunto moving, shall think fit to call to his Assistance any of his Subjects, constituting them his standing Council, and declaring and enacting that he will do nothing without them, and that no Act or Law of his, done without



their Approbation, shall be of Force and Binding to his Subjects : From this time forward the whole Frame and Constitution of the Government will be clearly alter'd, and that which was before an Absolute, will thenceforward become a Limited or Mix'd Monarchy ; and this Change in the Constitution, being made by him that had the Sovereign Power, will be Good and Valid ; neither will it be Lawful for him to re-assume again, without Consent of this Council, that Portion of the Sovereignty which he had before freely parted with and transferr'd to them.

And if, the Government being thus settl'd, the Sovereign Power for the Time being, that is, this King with his Council shall *both* agree to make a further Alteration in it ; if they shall *both* agree to lay aside their own Superiority, and to devolve the Sovereign Power that is then lodg'd in them on the People ; and shall enact and declare, that no Law shall be Good and Valid, but what the Majority of the Populace shall agree to ; by this, that Government, which was at first an Absolute, and afterwards a Limited Monarchy, will become a perfect Commonwealth, and after that they shall have thus transferr'd the whole Government upon the People, and freely parted with their own Right to it, it will be unjust in them to re-assume this Power, any otherwise than by the Free Gift of the People on whom they had transferr'd it.

And, on the other side, the Case will be exactly the same, if it be suppos'd, that the Right of Government was originally in the People ; for still it will be capable of the like Changes and Alterations ; the Sovereignty ( where-ever it is lodg'd ) may be alienated and parted with to others. If therefore the Sovereignty being ( as is now suppos'd ) lodg'd in the People, they, finding the Inconveniences of Numerous Popular Assemblies, shall think fit to transfer this Power to some few Persons delegated and chosen by themselves ; from this time forward these Delegates or Representatives of the People are the Supreme Power, and the People become meer Subjects to them, and may not forcibly take again to themselves that Power which they have freely parted with. And again, If this Representative Body of the People, in which the Sovereignty will be then lodg'd, finding the Inconveniences of this sort of Government, by Reason of the Factions they are subject to, shall think fit to make Choice of One single Person to preside and moderate in their Assembly, with a Negative or a Casting Vote, or with what further Degree of Power they shall think convenient to bestow upon him : This is a farther Alteration of the Manner of the Government ; because, what Power they give him they give from themselves, and may not challenge or claim it back again as their due, after they have freely parted with it : And when they do choosse such a Governor, they may choosse him upon what Conditions, they may constitute him with what Limitations they please ; they may, if they will, appoint him only for a Year, or other Limited Time ; or they may, if they think that better, appoint him for Life ; or they may, if they are so minded, order that the Power which they give him shall descend to his Heirs after him ; and they may call him King, or Duke, or Statholder, or give him whatever other Title they shall think better. And if after this, finding Inconveniences in this mix'd sort of Government,

vernment, they in whom the Supreme Power is then lodg'd, that is, the King, or Duke (or whatever else he is call'd) with his Council or Parliament, shall both agree together to make a further Alteration in the Government: If they shall agree to transfer the whole Sovereignty to him, and he shall consent to accept of it; and they do both by a solemn Act Decree and Ordain this Establishment; that Government which was at first a Democracy, and after that a Mix'd Monarchy, will thenceforward become an Absolute Monarchy; and any of all these Changes or Alterations in the Form or Manner of Government, being made by such as for the Time being were lawfully possess'd of the Sovereign Power, will be regularly made; and being once made, will be Valid and Binding: And in whatsoever Hands the Sovereignty shall be thus regularly plac'd, it can't be regularly taken from thence again but by his or their own Cession or Consent.

Thus, I think it is evident that no Change or Alteration of the Form of Government from one sort to another, is in it self unlawful to be made; provided it be made by those who have Power to make it; that is, by the Government it self. I mean, by him or them who for the Time being have the Sovereign Power in their Hands; because (as I said before) there is no one Sort of Form of Government that can truly be said to be of Divine Institution. The Power of Government indeed, that is, the Power and Authority that Governors have, is from God, *By me, says he, Kings Reign, and Princes decree Justice*; Prov. 8. 15. and, *there is no Power but of G O D*, says the *Apostle*; Rom. 13. 1. but the Designation and Appointment of particular Persons to the Administration of the Government, this is Humane; and the Distribution of the Power of Government into One, or into more Hands, this is likewise Humane: This is the Ordinance of Man only, and whatever is ordained by Man, is in its own Nature Alterable, and may at any Time be altered by the same Power that ordain'd it. I do not say, it may be alter'd by the same Persons that ordain'd it, (for 'tis possible that by such Ordinance the Power may be transferr'd from One Person to another, and what Power any Man has once given away from himself to another, he can't reclaim as in Right; he may receive it again as a Gift from him to whom he gave it, but he can't Challenge it again as his Due. I say therefore, I do not affirm, that whatever has been ordain'd by Man, may be alter'd by the same Persons that ordain'd it) I only affirm, that it may be altered by the same Power that ordain'd it. I affirm, that the same Humane Power which has settl'd the Sovereignty in One Hand, may distribute it into several Hands; or if it has settl'd it in many Hands, it may take it thence and give it into One Hand; the same Humane Power which has made the Persons of such as have the Administration of the Government Elective, may ordain that they shall be successive: That same Humane Power that can settle a Crown in Entail, can also cut off the Entail off a Crown; that same Humane Power that can settle the Succession of a Crown unconditionally, may appoint Conditions, without performing which he that is next Heir in Course shall not inherit: And whatever Establishment of the Government the Supreme and Sovereign Power of any Nation makes in One Age, the Supreme and Sovereign Power for the time being of the same Nation, may in the next Age  
make

make null and void. For the Supreme Power of every Nation, is, and must needs be in every Age lodg'd somewhere or other, and the Highest Power for the time being, may, for its own Time, make what Laws and Ordinances it self pleases, as to the Settlement and Administration of the Government, which will be good Laws till they are repeal'd. But then the same Sovereign Power which has Authority to make a Law, has, and always must have as much Authority to repeal it; and no One Generation of Men can ever in such Matters so binds the Hands, and restrain the Power of the Generations to come, but that they in their Time will have the same full Power to order Publick Affairs according to their own Liking, that the present Generation has. There being therefore no meer Humane Constitution but what in its own Nature is alterable ( and I now take it for granted, that the particular Form or Manner of any Government is a meer Humane Constitution ) it plainly follows, that the Precept in the Text, forbidding *to Change*, or, *to meddle with those that are given to Change*, is not given to the Supreme Legislative Power, which may make what Changes in the Form of Government it thinks reasonable; but only to meer Subjects, whose Duty it is to be quiet, and to submit to the Powers that be; and who will act out of their Sphere, and in a Matter above their Capacity, in case they shall take upon them to unsettle that Form of Government, whatsoever it is, that is already establish'd, or to frame and set up a new One.

The Supreme Legislative Power, where-ever lodg'd, is therefore no otherwise concern'd in this Precept, than only as in a Matter of Prudence; and so far indeed they are very nearly concern'd in it; it being rarely that any considerable Change can be made in the Form of a Government that has been long establish'd, and under which the commonwealth has prosper'd and flourish'd, without more Danger of Hurt than Hope of Good to the Community: An Alteration in the Government being like a Reparation in the Foundation of an House, which if it be necessary to be made, must be made, and yet unless it be made very cautiously, can't be done without endangering the Downfall of the whole Fabrick. Whenever therefore the Supreme Power of any Nation undertakes to make any Change in the Establish'd Form of Government, they ought in Prudence to be first very well satisfy'd that such a Change is necessary; and they ought likewise wisely to foresee all the Consequences that may probably follow from such a Change, and to be well assur'd, that there will be more Good than Hurt in it: But when they are well satisfy'd in this, they may then, without any Breach of Duty or Justice, make such Alterations therein as they judge needful; they do no more than they have full Power and Authority to do in making such a Change, and it is the Duty of Subjects to acquiesce in the Wisdom of their Superiors.

And the Reason why I have now mention'd, and insisted so largely upon this Point, is (as I have already hinted) not only in order to give you the true Meaning (as I conceive) of this Precept, *Meddle not with them that are given to Change*; But likewise to give Ease and Satisfaction to the Consciences of Men, as to some Alterations that have been lately made in the Government of our own Nation.



For you all know, (I shall not need to tell you that, ) that the Supreme Legislative Power of this Nation, is by the Constitution lodg'd in the King or Queen for the time being, and in the Two Houses of Parliament ; that what is Enacted by their joint Authority, is a Law of the Land, and that nothing is a Law of the Land to which they do not all Three give their Consent : And in this Essential and most Fundamental Constitution of the Government, there has not ( *God* be ranked ) been made, and I hope never will be made, any Change or Alteration. But as to the Succession to the Crown, there have been of late made some very considerable Limitations ; and well had it been for the Nation if the same had been made an Hundred Years sooner. For whereas formerly the Crown descended of Course to the next in Blood, without any Exception, Condition or Limitation ; it is now limited to descend to the next Heir that is a Protestant ; and thereby not only One Person in particular who is of uncertain Birth, but likewise several others of the Popish Religion, of whose Legitimacy there has been no Doubt, are debarr'd and excluded from the Succession ; and it is also declar'd to be a Forfeiture of the Crown, for any one that is possess'd of it to be reconcil'd to the Church of *Rome*, or to marry with a Papist. I.W.M. & Seff.  
2 c.2.12.W.III.

Now this, you know, is what some amongst us are stumbled at : First, such a Change, they think, ought not to have been made ; and, secondly, now that it is made, they think, it is Null and Invalid.

But the first of these is a Point which I am at present no Ways concern'd to enquire into ; neither, I think, are you : They that have Power to make such a Change are the best, they are indeed the only proper Judges of the Prudence, the Reason, the Necessity of it.

All therefore that I am concern'd to do, in order to give Ease and Satisfaction to the Consciences of those Subjects who have any Doubts or Scruples about the Matter, is only to shew, that they who made this Alteration as to the Succession of the Crown, had Power suffieient to make it, and consequently, that now it is made it is Valid and Binding ; so that all those who are oblig'd by Law to declare ( as all Persons in Place and Office now are ) that they do not believe, that any Person hath now any Right or Title to the Crown of this Realm, otherwise than according to this Settlement of the Succession, may safely and with a good Conscience mak this Declaration.

For this I take to be an undoubted Truth, that no Man has a *natural Right* to any thing in this World more than to the Necessaries of Life : Whatever Right any Man has to Estate or Dignity, or Dominion, except only over the Fruit of his own Body, is meerly Humane ; that is, 'tis a Right that is given by the Law of the Land or the Constitution of the Realm ; thus, That the Eldest Son should inherit all his Father's real Estate, is no Law of Nature, for by Nature all his Children have Right alike ; and even here with us, where this is the general Law of Inheritance, yet there are real Estates in some Places, that descend after another manner, all to the Younger Son, or to all Sons alike ; and in some other Countries perhaps, the whole real Estate of every Person, after the Decease of the Possessor, may revert to the Crown from which it was granted, and the Exchequer or Publick

lick Treasury may be also the sole Heir to his Personal Estate. And if no Man has a Natural Right to an Estate, much less can he have a Natural Right to Government, I mean, out of his own Family; 'tis the Supreme Power of every Nation that gives this Right to whom it pleases, and in such Manner as it pleases; 'tis this Supreme Power of every Nation that establishes in several Nations a different sort of Government, and which in Monarchies makes the Crown of one Nation to be Elective, and of another Successive; and which in Hereditary Monarchies, excludes, in one Country, all the Females and their Issue, and, in another Country admits the next in Blood to inherit, whether Male or Female, and in the same Proximity of Blood, prefers the Male before the Female. And I never yet heard it offer'd to be prov'd, that any of these Conditions or Limitations of Succession to a Crown, were Breaches of a Law of Nature, or Violations of a natural Right.

Now therefore, if this be true That no Man has a Natural Right to the Government of a Kingdom, it remains, that the only Right which any Person hath thereto must be a Legal Right; that is, such a Right as is given him by the Law and Constitution of the Realm; and the Law can give no Right any longer than while it self is in Force; and the same Sovereign Legislative Power that can make a Law, has as much Authority to repeal a Law; and the Law which gives any such Right, being by sufficient Authority repealed, the Right which was solely founded upon that Law, must needs become Null and Void: For the Right having no other Foundation but that Law, that Foundation being remov'd by the Repeal of the Law, the Right that was built upon that and nothing else, must needs fall to the Ground.

To me therefore it seems very plain, that whatever Right, either that particular Person, of the Legitimacy of whose Birth there is so much Doubt, or any other Person or Persons whatsoever, that are nearer of King to the Crown than that Family is on which it is now entail'd, had or might be suppos'd to have had, in Case there had been no Change made in the Laws relating to the Succession, it is by the Change that has been now made in those Laws clearly cut off and destroy'd; so that now we may truly declare, that neither he nor they, who by this last Law are excluded, have any Right or Title whatsoever to the Crown of this Realm: For no Right ever had they, or could they have but by Law, and the Law has now given this Right from them to others; and the Supreme Legislative Power of the present Time, has certainly as much Power and Authority to grant this Right of Succession to whom it will, as the same Legislative Power of the former Times had.

So that I think no Person can now have any reasonable Doubt of the Lawfulness of making this Declaration, which all in Places and Offices are Bound to make, unless he doubts whether this last Law, so limiting the Succession to the Crown, be a Law of the Land; that is, whether it was enact'd by the Supreme Legislative Power of the Nation, viz. the King and the Two Houses of Parliament, in whom, according to our present Constitution, the Supreme Legislative Power is most certainly lodg'd. And to him who has any Doubt in his Mind whether or no this be a Law of the Land, I have little to say but this, that if he himself don't remember the making of the Law, (which I suppose most of us do) he may look into the Statute Book, and see if it be not there printed with the Rest; or he may, if he has still a Mind to be more certain of it, search the Records, and see if the Original Act be not there entred and kept, as one of the Laws and Statutes of this Realm. Or if this won't satisfy, I leave him to be told by the Lawyers (for 'tis not within my Profession to tell him that) that according to the Constitution of our Government, as it now is, and as it has been for several Hundred Years past, the King (for the time being in Possession of the Crown, and recogniz'd and acknowledg'd by the States of the Realm, is (without further Enquiry into other Titles) Lawful and Rightful King, at least so far as that an Act of Parliament pass'd by him is a Good and Valid Law: This I suppose the Lawyers will tell him; this I'm sure they must say, or else they must grant that well nigh half the Statutes, not only of the present, but of former Times, according to which they Plead, and according to which the Civil Rights of the Subjects are judicially determin'd, are not good Laws and Statutes.

Thus, I think I have made it appear, that this Precept, Meddle not with them that are given to Change, does not reach the Duty of Sovereigns Powers, who may Lawfully make what Changes and Alterations in the Frame and Constitution of the Government they themselves think fit; but only of Subjects, whose Duty it is to be Quiet and Contented

rented in their Station, and to submit to that Form of Government which is establish'd, believing ( as the *Apostle* teaches ) that *there is no Power but of GOD*, that *the Powers that be are ordained of GOD*; that *whosoever resisteth the Power, resisteth the Ordinance of GOD*, and that *they that resist shall receive to themselves Damnation*.

And now I come to speak very briefly to the Two Points before propos'd to be spoken to, in order to the Explication of the Third and Last Branch of the Wise Man's Advise to his Son, *Meddle not with them that are given to Change*, viz. to enquire 1. Who they are that may be said to be given to Change; And, 2, What it is to *meddle with such Men*.

I. Who they are that may be said to be *given to Change*. And,

1. First of all, This they certainly are who are uneasy in that State of Subjection which God has plac'd them in, who think themselves better able to govern the Kingdom than those are in whose Hands Providence has deposited this Care; For they who have this Conceit of themselves, and yet according to the present Establishment are never like to be called to the Government, or to any Share of it, can't but wish the Destruction of the present Establishment, in Order to make Room for themselves to come in. *O that I were made Judge in the Land, that every Man which had any Suit or Cause might come unto me, and I would do him Justice*; so said *Ab-salom*, 2 Sam. 15. 4. He thought the Administration of the Government not so well manag'd by his Father *David* as it would be by himself; and this fond Self conceit naturally put him upon endeavouring to Dethrone his Father, and to place himself in his Room.

2. They may be said to be *given to Change*, and do sufficiently shew that they are so, who tho' they do not express such an high Opinion of themselves, yet are ever expressing a very low and mean Opinion of those in whose Hands the Government is plac'd; who make it their Business to pry into, and enquire out all the Oversight or Miscarriages of the present Administration, ( and what Government is there, or ever was there so perfect, in which there have not been some Oversight or Miscarriages? ) who set themselves to divulge and spread abroad all the ill Things they know or have heard of concerning their Governors; who on all Occasions magnifie every little Failing, aggravate every small Miscarriage, judge of the Prudence of every Undertaking by its Success; and if any Enterprize that is taken in Hand miscarries, will never suffer such Unsuccessfulness to be attributed to Change, or Providence, or any other Cause, but either to gross Ignorance or Unskilfulness, or wilful Male-Administration. For to what Purpose is all such Talk, but only to discontent Mens Minds, to render them uneasy in their Station, and to dispose them to attempt a Revolution? They who allow themselves to talk at this Rate, have, it may be, too much Wit to venture the Burning of their own Fingers; but if they can influence and persuade others to it, that will answer their End as well. If they can but move others to Munity and Sedition, they make no Doubt but they shall afterwards find good Fishing for themselves in the Troubled Waters; and that if they can but influence the Ignorant, and easily Mis-guided Multitude to pull others down, they shall afterwards be able with Ease to set themselves up.

3. They



3. They may yet more truly be said to be *given to Change*, at least, they do more plainly shew themselves to be so, who if they can find no Faults in the Administration of Publick Affairs, do without Scruple make them; who set themselves to Forge and Frame any Lies that may do Hurt concerning the Counsels, the Actions, or the Persons of their Governors; in order to possess Mens Minds with unreasonable Fears and Jealousies, thereby to render the Persons of their Governors Odious, and their Government Weak and Precarious. But

4. They especially are most evidently *given to Change*, or rather they are more than given to it, they are actually attempting it; who in Case of any, whether True or Suppos'd, Disorders of State, go out of their own Way and Sphere to rectifie or redress them; and this they certainly do, who being meer Subjects, do use any other Means to get their Grievances Redress'd, than only Prayers and Tears. What Power they may exert for this Purpose, who have any Portion of Share of the Legislature vested in them, as with us, each House of Parliament manifestly has, I will not take upon me to say; they know best the Extent of their own Power, and upon what Occasions, and in what Degrees it is necessary or proper to exert it, in order to preserve the Balance that is establish'd by the Constitution: But it is manifestly irregular for meer Private Subjects, to gather together in Tumults, or to break out into open Rebellion against the Sovereign Power, on Pretence of doing themselves Right: This is a considerable Advance towards a Change, and in Probability (how Oppressive soever the present Government is) towards a Change much for the worse: The Miseries of Anarchy, Confusion, and Civil War, being commonly much greater, and more universally felt, than the Miseries occasion'd by the Tyranny and Oppression of any Government:

These are such as may be said to be *given to Change*. And,

2. They who may truly be said to *meddle with those that are given to Change*, are such who give them any manner of Encouragement in this their Irregular Proceeding; that is, who gladly give ear to their Uncharitable, Malicious and False Reports; who love to hear the Government blacken'd and defam'd; who are well-pleas'd that the Mischief is done by other Hands, which they themselves, for their own Safety sake, were afraid to undertake: They do give them still greater Encouragement, who suffer themselves to be cheated into an Opinion of such Mens Honesty, by the loud Pretences that they make of Zeal for Liberty and Religion, indeed, were it not for such abused and misled People as these, no Sedition would ever be very formidable. But they, above all, may most truly be said to *meddle with such as are given to Change*, who join and take part with such whose open Design it is, (no Matter upon what specious Pretences) to dissolve the present Government, and to set up a New One: They who do thus meddle with such as are *given to Change*, are no whit better than those are whom they join with, and may justly expect the same Reward; even that mention'd in the Verse following the Text, *Their Calamity shall rise suddenly, and who knoweth the Ruin of them both.*

I shall observe but one thing more concerning the Precept in the Text, I mean,

mean, the Two last Branches of it ; *Fear the King*, and, *Meddle not with them that are given to Change* : and this I shall do, only in order to deduce one very Just, and I think also Useful, and very Seasonable Inference from the whole, and so conclude.

It is this ; That these Two Branches of the Wise Man's Advice, as they are given to none but Subjects, ( for the King himself is not to fear the King, and they who have the Power of the Government may lawfully, as I have shewed already, not only attempt, but make Changes in it, if they see Cause, ) so they are plainly given to *all* that are meer Subjects ; and that whether the King be so good a King as they could wish for or no, or whether the Government be as gentle and perfect as it might be or not ; For the Text takes no Notice of the Personal Qualifications of the King, neither of his Wisdom and Vertue, nor of his Want of them, nor yet of the Excellencies or Imperfections of the Government ; but it speaks in general of any King for the time being, when it commands Subjects to fear their King ; and it speaks of any sort or kind of Government, that for the time being is regularly Establish'd, when it forbids the Subjects to meditate or endeavour the making Alteration in it.

Now if it be the Duty of Subjects to fear their King, even tho' he be not so good an One as they could wish, and not to project or undertake to make any Change in the Government, even tho' it be for the better ( for that to be sure is what all such Medlers do think, at least, 'tis what they will not fail to give out ; ) If it be the Duty of meer Subjects to take these Things as they find them, because none can regularly go about even to reform the Government but the Sovereign Power, or at least only such Persons as have some Share of the Sovereignty lodg'd in them ; and then only according to that Measure thereof which they have, and within those Bounds which are set to their Power by the Constitution ; much rather are all meer Subjects bound, both in Duty and also in Interest, to Fear and Obey a Good and Gracious Sovereign, and not only to be Quiet and Contented, but very Thankful too, if they have the Happiness to be under a Government that can't be mended, a Government that seems as Perfect as a Humane Constitution can be. And this ( *God be thanked* ) is, in both these Respects, manifestly our Case at this present time. For,

1. As to the Constitution of our Government, that is certainly the best in the whole World : The *Utopians* would be hard put to it so much as to imagine a better : 'Tis a Constitution wherein the Power of the Sword is fully lodg'd in the Sovereign, and yet with all the Security that can be that it shall never be Mis-us'd ; whereby the Rights and Prerogatives of the Crown, and the Liberties and Properties of the People are with equal Care preserv'd ; wherein the Sovereign has all the Power that can be to do Good, and none to do Hurt, In a word, it is a Constitution, during the Continuance whereof, the People can never be Enslav'd and Ruin'd but with their own Consent, by Representatives of their own Choosing ; and it may be reasonably hop'd, that they will never be so foolish as to give their Consent to their own Destruction. And yet,

2, If this might be suppos'd, we should nevertheless be safe from present

sent Ruin, having ( God be thanked, and on this Day of Her Majesty's Happy Accession to the Crown we have, more especially, Reason to be thankful for it ; having, I say ) such a Sovereign now on the Throne, who might safely be Trusted with the highest and most unlimited Prerogatives because we are morally assur'd, she never would use them but to promote the Good and Welfare of her People. A *QUEEN* that is intirely in the Interests of her People, and can't reasonably be so much as suspected to have any Interest of her own distinct from theirs. A *QUEEN*, that has been remarkably careful about Matters of Piety, and express'd the most earnest Desire to transmit to Posterity the same excellent Religion that is Establish'd among us. A *QUEEN*, that is so far from endeavouring to Enrich her Self by the Spoil of her Subjects, that She has not only been beyond Example, Provident in the Management of the Publick Treasure, but also as Frugal in Her own Expences as with Decency, and with the Preservation of the Honour of the Crown she could be, with this only Design, that She might spare as much as was possible out of her own Revenue towards the Publick Use, that so Her Subjects might be the less burthen'd.

But it would be endless to say all that might be said upon this Subject. I'm sure without Flattery, and I verily believe, without the Suspicion of it ; and I am sensible I have already kept you too long.

I shall therefore only add this one thing more, *viz.* That being so extremely Happy as we now are, both in the Constitution of the Government and in the Administration of it ; we have nothing else to do, but to be thankful to God for these Blessings, to endeavour to walk worthy of them, and to pray for their Continuance : And in order to this last, to put up our hearty Supplications to the Throne of Grace, that God would be pleas'd to grant the *QUEEN* a long Life, and to direct Her Counsels, and prosper Her Endeavours for the Publick Good ; And that when He shall be pleased to translate Her hence to a better Kingdom ( which for our own sakes we can't but wish may not be in our Time ) he will then bless our Posterity with a Succession of such Princes ( and, if it may be, from her own Body ) who like Her may Govern Wisely and Live Vertuously, and by the Authority both of their Laws and of their Godly Example, may perfect that Reformation which ( such is our present Corruption both as to Principles and Morals ) it is to be fear'd Her Reign alone ( tho' we wish it may be a very long one ) will not be sufficient to accomplish.

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*And may GOD of his Infinite Mercy vouchsafe to hear and grant these our Petitions, for the Sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. To whom, &c.*

F I N I S.